



(U//~~FOUO~~) History Today - 5 December 2007

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(U) Marian Rejewski, the principal mathematician who analyzed the German ENIGMA machine on behalf of the Polish Cipher Bureau, along with colleagues from the Bureau, was forced to flee his homeland when the Germans invaded. (See 4 December's History Today)

(U) Rejewski's fate during and after World War II does not reflect well on any of the countries that benefited from his brilliance.

(U) During the war, he and his two colleagues went through several harrowing escapes to elude capture by the Germans, first escaping through the Balkans to France. There they continued working on Enigma, even after the French defeat through a clandestine French-British operation. Fearing the demise of Vichy France, in 1942, Rejewski and Zigalski (Rozycki had died when a ship he was on disappeared, presumably torpedoed by the Germans) repeated their escape act, this time through Spain (where they were imprisoned briefly) and Portugal to Britain. There they were refused access to work on Enigma and were assigned to low-level tasks.

(U) After the war, Rejewski returned to Poland, but since he had spent so many years in Britain, he was considered a security risk by the leftist-leaning and communist governments that controlled that country. His work on Enigma was buried under classification concerns. He was relegated to a job as senior accountant for a collective farm, and had to fight governmental bureaucracy to get his service time before and during the war credited for pension purposes. Only after the revelation, starting in the 1970s, of the role the decryption of Enigma messages played in winning the war did he receive any recognition at home for his accomplishments.

(U) By and large, British acknowledgement of Rejewski's contribution is now full and complete. Since 1999, Bletchley Park's commemorations of the war have included a Polish Day. France also belatedly honored his contributions, but for years the only tributes to his work were private ones.

(U) As for the U.S., and NSA specifically, mention of his accomplishments can be found at the Enigma display in the National Cryptologic Museum. And, a special exhibit to honor the 75th anniversary of the Polish achievements will be opening at the museum before the end of the month.

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